

## **Middle Patuxent Environmental Area Volunteer Program**

The mission of the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) volunteer program is to increase citizen interest and participation in the management of the Area's natural resources. We aim to accomplish this mission by providing opportunities for environmental education and outdoor recreation through volunteer project activities.

### **Invasive Species Control Programs:**

#### *Conservation Stewardship Project*

Invasions of non-native, invasive plants are the second greatest threat to native species after direct habitat destruction. A working partnership with the Howard County Master Gardeners has been formed to tackle invasive plants in the MPEA. Monthly invasive species control work days will be scheduled for March through November, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month, skipping July & August. See the Get Involved tab under the Park Information section of our website for the complete schedule.

#### *Weed Warriors*

Qualified volunteers are taught about the identification and control methods for non-native, invasive plants. Upon completion of mandatory training classes, participants are assigned tasks to complete independently. Weed Warriors must be comfortable working alone or in small groups and also adhere to strict guidelines.

### **Trail Maintenance Programs:**

There are 5.4 miles of hiking trails in the MPEA. Volunteers are needed to assist with the maintenance of these primitive, foot-traffic only trails. Most of the trail work consists of pruning back vegetation that encroaches upon the trail system. The basis for all of our trail maintenance is found in our trail management protocol. Participants may choose to attend Group Work Sessions supervised by MPEA staff or attend mandatory training classes to become an Independent Trail Maintenance Volunteer.

### **Stream Monitoring**

The Middle Patuxent River runs the length of the MPEA, south from Route 108 to Route 32. Additionally, there are 17 tributary streams that flow into the river within the Environmental Area. Monitoring water quality in these streams is essential to our natural resource management goals. Volunteers will monitor sites at least once annually. We are currently recruiting for individuals who are interested in initiating a monitoring program.

### **Nest Box Monitoring**

There are currently 26 nest boxes in the MPEA that were installed for use by bluebirds and other native, cavity-nesting birds. We utilize volunteers to monitor and maintain these boxes in our wildlife clearing areas, Clegg's meadow, and other grassland restoration plots. Volunteer Nest Box Monitors must also enter the data they collect into the Cornell Lab of Ornithology NestWatch online database. [Sue Muller](#) in the Natural Resources Division runs this program County-wide.

### **Butterfly Counts**

Richard Smith, Howard County Bird Club, and Sue Muller, Howard Co. Dept. of Recreation and Parks, are initiating an on-going survey of county butterflies. The main goal of the surveys is to track changes in population over a long period. The surveys of individual sites will be conducted as frequently as every two weeks or as infrequently as once a month from mid-April through mid-October. Each observer or group will have his/their own survey site. Survey dates and times will be of each observer's or group's choosing. Time spent can be as little as one hour or a half day or more depending on the site size and season. People of all skill levels are welcome. Please notify the Dept. of Recreation and Parks if you would like to volunteer or just to indicate your level of interest.

### **Frogwatch USA**

Considering the worldwide decline in amphibian populations, collecting information on frogs and toads in an environmental area surrounded by development is an important step in understanding how human activities impact our environment. The MPEA contains 3 ponds and several additional frog and toad breeding areas. Volunteers can help by agreeing to monitor a site within the MPEA twice-monthly from March through July. This program also requires participants to enter the data they collect into the online database for the nationwide Frogwatch USA program. [Sue Muller](#) in the Natural Resources Division runs this program County-wide.

### **Terrestrial Salamander Monitoring**

Program is currently under development. Highly motivated volunteers needed. Inquire if interested.

**Successfully delivering our mission depends on the efforts of volunteers such as you!** For more information on any of the volunteer programs described above, contact [Jeff Claffy](#), MPEA Assistant Natural Resources Manager.